

Happy Birding '93

Newsletter for Birdwatchers

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Asian Mid-winter Waterfowl Census

The Karnataka Scene

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The mid-winter waterfowl census began in 1987 in Karnataka, with a coverage of just 7 tanks in and around Bangalore, by a group of volunteers. In the past six years, this movement has made rapid strides, both in terms of expansion of coverage and number of volunteers involved. The census now covers most of the southern districts of the State, with excellent coverage in Bangalore, Mysore, Mandya and North Kanara districts, with limited coverage in other districts. During the 1992 census, a total of 354 tanks were covered, in 12 districts. The expansion of the coverage has been mainly due to the dedicated work of the volunteers and excellent cooperation from the Forest Department.

A record number of 354 wetlands were covered in the state during the January 1992 Census. Tumkur and Kolar districts have come under the census network from this year.

Most wetlands were full on account of copious rains received during the monsoon months of 1991. As the river Cauvery was in spate, the flood waters were suddenly released from the KRS Dam on 28th July 1991. This resulted in tragic loss of over 600 nests of waterbirds at South India's most important bird sanctuary - Ranganthittu. (Newsletter for Birdwatchers 31, 7&8, 1992). Oriental Darter, a threatened waterfowl also suffered in this tragedy.

Threatened Waterfowl Count Results for Karnataka 1987 - 1992

Threatened Waterfowl	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Spot-billed Pelican	1	27	150	2	141	285
Oriental Darter	0	21	82	8	8	67
Black Necked Stork	0	0	5	6	5	0
Lesser Adjutant Stork	0	3	4	2	0	0
Greater Adjutant Stork	0	0	0	0	0	0
Large Whistling Duck	0	0	86*	0	333*	0
Black-bellied Tern	0	0	6	0	11	34

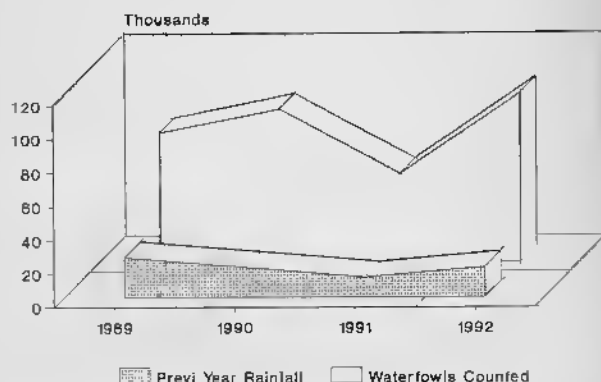
* needs reconfirmation.

Threatened Waterfowl

34 Black-bellied Terns were reported this year as against 11 last year. Koppa and Kuntur Kere of Mysore District and T.G. Halli of Bangalore District reported their presence. The Cauvery river stretch from Srirangapatna to Cauvery falls is seemingly the last refuge for the Black-bellied terns in the state.

Fig. 1.

Waterfowl Population Trends in Karnataka
4 years data 1989 to 92, in 81 tanks

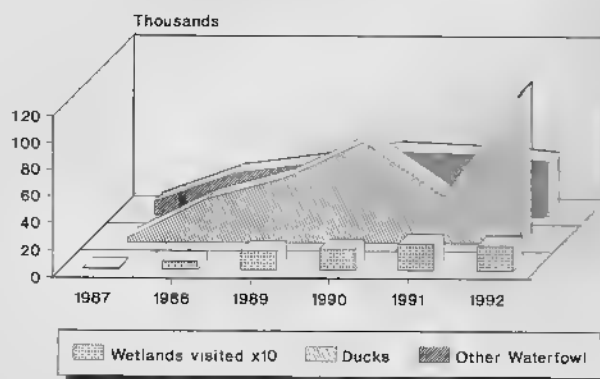


Spot Billed Pelican has shown a slight increase in numbers from 128 in 1991 to 143 in 1992 at Kokre Bellur Pelicanry. The pelicans continue to suffer due to lack of suitable nesting trees at this pelicanry. It was recommended at the workshop on threatened waterfowl held in Karachi during December 1991, to erect suitable nesting platforms on experimental basis at this pelicanry. 281 Spotbilled Pelicans were recorded this year as against 141 last year.

Lesser, Greater and Black-necked Storks, and Large Whistling Duck could not be sighted anywhere in the state by the counters during the census this year.

Fig. 2.

Asian Waterfowl Counts
Karnataka 1987 - 1992



*1992 (only wetlands counted in previous years)

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EDITORIAL

Annual Report

The time has come to assess the performance of the Newsletter and its "members" for the past 12 months. Under the new Companies Act it has become mandatory for all business and industrial concerns to submit an environmental audit together with their financial results. The Newsletter must also attempt an audit of performance for the year ending 31st December. Birdwatchers can also

"pollute" the environment in many ways — by frightening away nesting birds by approaching them too closely or by physical disturbances to their habitat.

To make a worthwhile assessment, let each one of us answer the following questions: Have we achieved any results in the way of saving habitats and species? Have we motivated the administration to take a birds eye view of things? — a single nesting tree saved; a small pond preserved for a Green Sandpiper; a patch of meadow saved for a Lark; the stopping of effluents resulting in the eutrophication of a wetland.

During the past three and half years in Kodaikanal, your Editor tried to do his bit, not too successfully I'm afraid. Some of you have been to the Bear Shola Falls, one of the loveliest forest-cum-waterfall complexes in the hills. It is the home of the rare black and orange flycatcher. Because of water shortage in Kodaikanal, the water from this area is being taken in lorries for distribution to hotels and residences during the busy season. Shortage of water in Kodaikanal is a clear sign that tourism has over-stepped the carrying capacity of the area. The D.F.O. and others were persuaded not to allow the intrusion of polluting diesel vehicles into this sensitive area. I hope that Bear Shola will be preserved in the manner in which it should be, though already it is not what it was a decade ago.

In the previous Newsletter, the September-October issue, there was a report about the Sarus Crane Project in the marsh in Kodaikanal. If this project operates (Anil Agarwal has offered to help), then it will be a good indication of the manner in which birds can be utilised for the preservation of habitats which are not only good for the birds but also for humanity. I need not emphasise how important the marsh is for keeping the adjoining lake in a healthy condition.

While in Kodaikanal, we also emphasised the great ecological value of the grasslands in Manavanur. This is a splendid natural area about 25 km from Kodaikanal town. There must be a few areas of this nature with over a thousand hectares of rich grassland. BNHS at one stage had thought of making it a study area of grassland birds, but the project was not pursued. As a result of some recommendations made through the Ministry of Environment, they have suggested to the State Government that a proper ecological survey be made of this area before any future development schemes are sanctioned.

Speaking of the preservation of habitats, we have to be grateful to the several surveys and reports by Asad Rahmani and Jamil Urfi on the wetlands of the U.P. Whenever such reports appear, readers of the Newsletter

who are in touch with Administrators of the State concerned must make an attempt to get these reports into the right hands and try and ensure that these valuable areas do not suffer from wrong land use practices.

We have to thank Andrew Robertson and Aasheesh Pittie for having taken the trouble to bring to our notice the new scientific nomenclature of birds. This will enable us to take a more scientific interest in the common birds of our country and to put forward our own recommendations about their classification.

The Ornithological Society of India is now in an embryonic stage and much depends on the amount of time which our Secretary General, Dr. Asha Chandola Sakhlani, is able to devote to it. Frankly, not being a Scientist myself, I was a little hesitant to agree to chair this organisation, but as I have made it clear, I am doing so until the first elections are held, mainly as a holding operation. I would also, even at this late stage, suggest that we decide very carefully what the structure of the OSI should be, so that it could coordinate effectively with other bodies in existence – the BNHS, SACON and others.

One of my suggestions is that the Newsletter for Birdwatchers should become the official publication of the Ornithological Society of India, or at least the popular medium of communication. The NLBW could continue to be in this position even after the OSI decides to have its own scientific publication. In effect then the OSI is the successor of the Birdwatchers Field Club of India. Nevertheless, Subscriptions for the NLBW, should be sent to the Publisher, S.Sridhar, in the name of Newsletter for Birdwatchers.. The rate will be Rs.40/- for the calendar year. Students including collegians can, if they wish, pay Rs.25/-, foreign subscribers pay Rs.150/- inclusive of postage.

The Annual Waterfowl Census is one of the more important events relating to the conservation of birds in our country. The next census is round the corner, and the article by Asad Rahmani in this issue should be noted by all intending participants. Also, the excellent report on the Asian and Australasian Waterfowl Census 1992, produced by the International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau, contains a remarkable amount of information relating to Indian birds.

It is a matter of gratification to us that one of the authors of this report is Taej Mundkhur who has now migrated to Malaysia but he and S.A. Hussain who are both at the A.W.B. will, I am sure, continue to be of help to us. It is also noteworthy that this report was printed in India, and distributed to over 850 participants from 37 countries.

The Indian section of the report says:

"Since the beginning of the AWC in 1987, India has been the largest contributor in terms of wetlands covered and number of participants. This resulted in a fast-growing amount of work for the National Coordinators. It was therefore suggested by them at the Karachi symposium to replace the national coordination by Regional Coordinators, so as to share the work among people with a good knowledge of one or a few states. The list of new Regional Coordinators can be found at the end of the report; from now on please send data to them. This new coordination started operating very efficiently in 1992, and the continued collaboration of Bombay Natural History Society, who received and computerised part of the data, was very much appreciated.

In January 1992, 776 sites were counted and harboured a total of over 2 million waterfowl."

The regional coordinators referred to in the above paragraph are:- Dr. Rishad Pravez, Rajkot; Vivek Menon, New Delhi; Prakash Gole, Pune; P.O. Nameer, Kerala; V.J. Rajan, Tamil Nadu; Siraj Taher, Hyderabad; S. Sridhar, Bangalore; P.C. Bhattacharya, Guwahati.

The Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History has now been established, and the second Annual General Meeting with the SACON Society is scheduled to take place on 5th December 1992. The Minutes of the Meeting held on 14th March 1992, says:-

"After several protracted discussions with the BNHS and Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, the formalities for setting up the Institute was finalised and the Institute was formally inaugurated on 5th June 1990, by planting a few saplings of selected tree species in the BNHS land at Goregaon. Unfortunately, Dr. Salim Ali was not with us on that auspicious occasion, as he passed away in June 1987.

The SACON as a Society was registered on 23rd October 1990, under the Societies Registration Act, 1861. The Governing Council had 6 meetings. The Director of SACON (Dr. V.S. Vijayan) assumed charge on 1st November 1991. The location of SACON was decided by the Site Selection Committee appointed by the Governing Council after contacting various State Government authorities and inspecting the sites offered by them. The recommendation of the Site Selection Committee to have the main Centre of the SACON at Sadivayal near Coimbatore, was approved by the Governing Council. The total outlay for SACON for the VIII Five Year Plan period is Rs.306 lakhs. Out of which Rs.50 lakhs is set apart for civil works. Rs.108 lakhs for establishment including staff salary and allowances and Rs.58 lakhs for equipment and furniture. Altogether SACON will have a strength of 48

staff at the end of VIII Five Year Plan period. During the first phase of recruitment 5 Scientific staff have been appointed apart from the Director. In the second phase 7 Research staff will be appointed, and in the third phase 7 more will be added to the Scientific staff. A perspective plan for SACON was finalised and an Action Plan for 1991-92 consisting of research projects was also approved by the Governing Council. The field work would commence immediately after the research staff are in position.

SACON is also intending to set up an Extension Centre at Goregaon, Bombay, in the land proposed to be transferred to SACON by BNHS for this purpose. The Extension Centre will have modern amenities for conducting nature education activities. The facilities will be made available to Bombay Natural History Society also for carrying out their schemes on nature education.

SACON has also proposed to have a Wetland Research Centre at Bharatpur and, at a later stage, one Field Centre at Jalpaiguri in the North East and another in Kashmir. Field projects for Bharatpur and Point Calimere are also envisaged for the VIII Plan Period. The Annual Report which is presented at this meeting will reflect more details of this. It was decided to have better linkage and coordination with the BNHS so as to avoid overlapping of activities. Further, it was decided to have a Joint Research Council having members from both the SACON and BNHS."

Apart from SACON which aims to be a centre of excellence on ornithology in India, we have also to take a decision about the proposals made by S.A. Hussain,

Vice-Chairman, Asian Continental Section, ICBP, regarding the formation of a chapter in India. India is a large country and I suppose that there is no harm in having several Societies pursuing the same objectives and coordination. There is the BNHS, SACON, our own modest Ornithological Society of India (even in its embryonic stage), and there is a talk of the Indian National Section of the IBCP. Some intelligent coordination is called for to ensure that we do not spend too much time administration at the expense of birdwatching in the field.

The number of birdwatching societies which are springing up is very cheering. Some of the older ones are showing new life, and Brigadier C.M. Cariappa of the Coorg Wildlife Society (Gen. Thimayya Circle, Madikeri, Karnataka-571 201) is doing his bit towards encouraging residents of Coorg to take an interest in birds. He has recently published a list of 100 familiar birds commonly seen in Coorg. I am sure he will be glad to provide the list to anyone interested. The presence of the Black Eagle in Coorg suggests that some natural forest remains.

What about our accounts? Fortunately, S. Sridhar is financing the publication of the Newsletter, and though I would not like to question him too closely, I understood from him that the sale of his excellent bird greeting cards meets the cost of producing and distributing the Newsletter and makes up the shortfall from the donations. In any case, I hope that he is not too much in the red.

What is our resolution for the New Year? To enjoy the sight and the sound of birds — from this much good can result.

BIRD LIFE AT NRCS FARM, PERUVANNAMUZHI (Kozhikode District, Kerala)

S. DEVASAHYAM, J. REMA and M. ANANDARAJ, National Research Centre for Spices, Marikunnu, Calicut 673 012

The Experimental Farm of the National Research Centre for Spices (NRCS) is located at Peruvannamuzhi (Kozhikode district, Kerala), 51 km away from Calicut near the Kuttiadi Irrigation Project. The farm is at the foot hills of the Wynad range of Western ghats and is bordered by tropical moist deciduous forests. The farm has an area of 94 ha with a maximum elevation of 60 m above MSL and receives an annual rainfall of about 3850 mm in 120 rainy days (average for 1988-90); rainfall is particularly heavy during June, July and August. The main crops grown in the farm include black pepper (*Piper nigrum*), ginger (*Zingiber officinale*), turmeric (*Curcuma longa*), cinnamon (*Cinnamomum verum*), clove (*Eugenia caryophyllus*), nutmeg

(*Myristica fragrans*) and coconut (*Cocos nucifera*). The vegetation in the uncultivated areas is that of secondary outgrowths of shrubs and trees in addition to numerous introduced trees such as *Albizia falcata*, *Acacia auriculiformis*, *Erythrina indica*, *Caruga pinnata*, *Glicidia sepium* and *Leucaena leucocephala* that were raised for shade and also as supports for black pepper vines. The farm thus provides varied habitats for bird life such as open patches of grassland, ginger and turmeric fields, shrubby bushes, plantations of black pepper, cinnamon, clove, nutmeg and coconut with shade and support trees and secondary outgrowths of forest trees.

For the past few years we have been observing the birds that visit the farm and hope that the checklist would provide useful information on bird life in this part of the State. Peruvannamuzhi is being developed as a tourist spot by the State Government and we presume that the list would be of use to bird watchers among the tourists. Ninety two types of birds belonging to 32 families were recorded by us among which five could not be identified with certainty. The list is specific for birds that occurred within the farm and just outside it.

We could come across a few species that were probably overlooked earlier in this region. The most interesting was the wire tailed swallow which was observed hawking insects over fallow turmeric fields along with red rumped swallows. The birds were flying low and the 'wires' on the tail were clearly visible even without binoculars. This species finds no mention in Ali's *Birds of Kerala* (1984). The book also mentions that the red spurfowl and the goldfronted chloropsis are restricted north to about the Palghat gap in Kerala. However both the species were very commonly seen in our farm. The red spurfowl was generally seen during evenings rummaging among fallen leaves at roadsides; the bird is aptly called as *chavitilla kozhi* (leaf litter fowl) locally. The goldfronted chloropsis was invariably attracted to blossoms of many trees and shrubs.

Bird life in the farm was diversified due to its partially disturbed nature of habitat and it is well known that such habitats support more number of species than undisturbed ones. Bird activity was generally higher during September-October after cessation of monsoon showers probably because insect life was more abundant during this period and the days were clear and ideal for foraging. Many of the winter visitors were also found here up to March-April. Surprisingly we could come across very few raptors, but wonder whether we overlooked them.

The flowering of numerous coral trees (*E. indica*) and silk cotton trees (*Salmaalial malabarica*) during summer (February-April) also attracted many birds and some like the jungle myna were never seen otherwise. These two trees were ideal for bird watching provided one was prepared to undergo a bit of 'pain in the neck' by looking up constantly. The fruiting of some forest trees also attracted many birds. One particular tree (probably belonging to Anacardiaceae) that bore fruits during January-March had up to 11 different species feeding on the small black fruits with the usual commotion associated with such trees. These included blackbird, common myna, golden oriole, greyfronted green pigeon, koel, lorikeet, redvented bulbul, redwhiskered bulbul, small green barbet, tree pie and whitethroated ground thrush. The

blackbird was seen only on this tree and always flew down to the bushes at the slightest disturbance. We also observed whitethroated ground thrushes springing at the fruits high up on the tree to the accompaniment of excited 'kree-kree' calls. We were under the impression that this species was essentially a ground feeder, feeding only on fallen fruits. In this case the birds definitely preferred to feed on the tree though the ground was full of fallen fruits. Another favourite tree for frugivorous birds was *Ficus asperima* which bore goose berry sized yellow fruits during March-May. Though this tree did not attract a variety of birds like the previous one, it was a favourite for small flocks of greyfronted green pigeons which noisefully (only their occasional pleasant musical whistle giving away their presence) fed on the fruits, often hanging upside down to reach them. The golden oriole, small green barbet and koel were also attracted to the tree.

Summer time was also the season for the breeding of many birds and signs of breeding activity were observed in blackheaded oriole, goldfronted chloropsis, jungle crow, Nilgiri flower pecker, redvented bulbul, redwhiskered bulbul, redwattled lapwing, yellowbrowed bulbul, red spurfowl and sunbirds. One of us was fortunate in observing a red spurfowl hen (a known skulker) walking with a chick, still in its down feathers, the rustle of fallen dry leaves among the bushes giving away its presence. Among the various introduced trees, *A. falcata* was regularly used by small green barbets for nesting probably because its wood was soft and ideal for excavation of nest holes. We also observed numerous oval shaped entrance holes of Malherbe's goldenbacked woodpecker on this tree. However, *A. auriculiformis* was rarely used by birds for various activities. The branching habit of the tree and its 'loose' foliage probably doesn't encourage birds from building their nests and the wood is fairly hard for excavation of nest holes. We could come across very few birds on the tree; only redvented bulbuls and small green barbets were occasionally seen hunting for insects among the foliage. Interestingly, we did not come across any bird feeding on the seeds of the tree as in Calicut where four species were observed feeding on the seeds (Devasahayam and Rema, *NLBW* 31 (1&2): 12-13, 1991); probably the birds are yet to 'learn' to utilise this new food source. The only bird found invariably on this tree was a leaf warbler that restlessly hunted for insects among the foliage during October-March.

Check list of birds of NRCS farm, Peruvannamuzhi

Family : Ardeidae

Pond heron

Ardeola grayii

Cattle egret

Bubulcus ibis

Family : AccipitridaeCommon pariah kite
Shikra*Milvus migrans*
Accipiter badius
Circus gallicus

Short-toed eagle?

Family : Phasianidae

Red spurfowl

Grey junglefowl

Gallus spadicea
*Gallus sonneratii***Family : Charadriidae**

Redwattled lapwing

*Vanellus indicus***Family : Columbidae**

Greyfronted green pigeon

Blue rock pigeon

Spotted dove

Emerald dove

Treron pompadora
Columba livia
Streptopelia chinensis
*Chalcophaps indica***Family : Psittacidae**

Roseringed parakeet

Bluewinged parakeet

Lorikeet

Psittacula krameri
P. columboides
*Loriculus vernalis***Family : Cuculidae**

Pied crested cuckoo

Common hawk- cuckoo

Indian cuckoo

Baybanded cuckoo

Greenbilled malkoha

Indian koel

Southern crow-pheasant

Crow-pheasant ?

Clamator jacobinus
Cuculus varius
C. micropterus
Cacomantis sonneratii
Rhopodytes viridirostris
Eudynamis scolopacea
Centropus sinensis
*C. toulou***Family : Strigidae**

Collard scops owl ?

*Otus bakkamoena***Family : Caprimulgidae**

Nightjar

Caprimulgus sp.**Family : Apodidae**

Whiterumped spinetail swift

House swift

Palm swift

Crested tree swift

Chaetura sylvatica
Apus affinis
Cypsiurus parvus
*Hemiprocne longipennis***Family : Alcedinidae**

Small blue kingfisher ?

Whitebreasted kingfisher

Alcedo atthis
*Halcyon smyrnensis***Family : Meropidae**

Bluetailed bee-eater

Small green bee-eater

Merops philippinus
*M. orientalis***Family : Coraciidae**

Roller

*Coracias benghalensis***Family : Bucerotidae**

Grey hornbill

*Tockus griseus***Family : Capitonidae**

Small green barbet

*Megalaima viridis***Family : Picidae**

Goldenbacked woodpecker

Pigmy woodpecker

Heartspotted woodpecker

Dinopium benghalense
Dendrocopos nanus
*Hemicircus canente*Melherbe's goldenbacked
woodpecker*Chrysocolaptes lucidus***Family : Pittidae**

Indian pitta

*Pitta brachyura***Family : Hirudinidae**

Redrumped swallow

Wiretailed swallow

Hirundo daurica
*H. smithii***Family : Laniidae**

Greybacked shrike

Brown shrike

Lanius schach
*L. cristatus***Family : Oriolidae**

Golden oriole

Blackheaded oriole

Oriolus oriolus
*O. xanthornus***Family : Dicuridae**

Black drongo

Racket-tailed drongo

Dicrurus adsimilis
*D. paradiseus***Family : Artamidae**

Ashy swallow-shrike

*Artamus fuscus***Family : Sturnidae**

Greyheaded myna

Sturnus malabaricus
malabaricus

Blyth's myna

Common myna

Jungle myna

S. malabaricus blythii
Acridotheres tristis
*A. fuscus***Family : Corvidae**

Tree pie

Southern tree pie

Jungle crow

Dendrocitta vagabunda
Corvus splendens
*C. macrorhynchos***Family : Campephagidae**

Pied flycatcher-shrike

Malabar wood shrike

Blackheaded cuckoo-shrike

Orange minivet

Small minivet

Hemipus picatus
Tephrodornis virgatus
Coracina melanoptera
Pericrocotus flammeus
*P. cinnamomeus***Family : Irenidae**

Iora

Goldfronted chloropsis

Aegithina tiphia
*Chloropsis aurifrons***Family : Pycnonotidae**

Rubythroated bulbul

Redwhiskered bulbul

Redvented bulbul

Yellowbrowed bulbul

Pycnonotus melanicterus
P. jocosus
P. cafer
*Hypsipetes indicus***Family : Muscicapidae**

Rufous babbler

Jungle babbler

Brown flycatcher?

Tickell's blue flycatcher

Paradise flycatcher

Wren-warbler

Tailor bird

Leaf warbler

Magpie-robin

Malabar whistling thrush

Turdoides subrufus
T. striatus
Alseonax latirostris
Muscicapa tickelliae
Terpsiphone paradisi
Prinia sp.
Orthotomus sutorius
Phylloscopus sp.
Copsychus saularis
Myiophoneus horsfieldii

Whitethroated ground thrush *Zoothera citrina*
 Blackbird *Turdus merula*
Family : Motacillidae
 Grey wagtail *Motacilla caspica*
 Large pied wagtail *M. maderaspatensis*
Family : Dicaeidae
 Nilgiri flowerpecker *Dicaeum concolor*
Family : Nectariniidae

Purplerumped sunbird
 Small sunbird
 Loten's sunbird
 Purple sunbird
 Spider-hunter
Family : Ploceidae
 Whitebacked munia
 Spotted munia
Nectarinia zeylonica
N. minima
N. lotenia
N. asiatica
Arachnothera longirostris
Lonchura striata
L. punctulata

COMMENTS ON THE ANNUAL WATERFOWL COUNTS

ASAD R. RAHMANI, Centre of Wildlife & Ornithology, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh 202 202, India

The Annual Waterfowl Count in India organized by the Asian Waterfowl Research Bureau and the Bombay natural History Society has played a major role in arousing interest in wetland and waterfowl conservation in India. It has also brought forward many amateur and professional birdwatchers like Siraj Taher, Dr. Uttangi, V. Santaram, Taej Mundkhur and others. However, the Annual Waterfowl Count also gave opportunity to so-called birdwatchers who provided misleading and wrong data as there was no counter check.

No birdwatcher can claim to identify all the species. Some species have confusing plumage or are seen fleetingly or in difficult light so even the best of the birdwatchers have doubts about certain species, especially if the species is out of its normal range or habitat. How does one react to census data of a site in which many uncommon birds of India were reported in large numbers. Pawapuri Water Tank in Nalanda district of Bihar is one such site in which during the 1988 waterfowl count, a large number of uncommon birds were noted. These totally absurd data unfortunately managed to find a place in the first Wetlands and Waterfowls Newsletter published by the BNHS, and edited by Mr. J.C. Daniel, although it was mentioned (page 7) that the records of 575 Mergansers, 1000 White-fronted Geese, 300 Marbled Teals and 305 Scaup Ducks are doubtful/unlikely. Later, in the second Wetlands and Waterfowl Newsletter (1990), Christian Perennou questioned the census figures of Pawapuri.

During the waterfowl census of 1992, one of my students Perwez Iqbal, whom I trained for six months for birdwatching, did census on Pawapuri Tank on 5 January. Perwez did not see any of the 'rarities' reported to be present in large numbers during 1988.

According to Perwez, the 16.4 hectare Pawapuri Tank is a religious place with a temple of Lord Mahavir, known as Jal Mandir, in the middle of the tank. Jal Mandir means a temple surrounded by water. A red marbled bridge of 1.5

metre width connects the temple to a road from where the pilgrims come. The tank is further subdivided into four segments by mud bridges or bunds. These bunds are used by birds for loafing and resting, particularly by large number of whistling ducks. During the census day, Perwez noted that the mean depth of the water was not more than one metre. The tank is fully protected and shooting or trapping is strictly prohibited. Water lily covers a large part of the tank.

The tank is more or less square in shape and surrounded by a road. On the north side is a charity hospital and lodges, while rest houses are located on the east. All around are crop fields. This temple tank is only 9 km from Biharsharif and 24 km from Nawadah towns.

Perwez was able to see only 23 species, the Lesser Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna javanica* being the commonest species (2,364) which is nothing unusual because in some of the protected wetlands of north and northeast India, this duck is present in thousands. Perwez could identify only 23 Large Whistling Ducks *D. bicolor*, although he suspects there could have been more. Interestingly, during 1988 count, 170 *bicolor* were seen, and no *javanica*.

Perwez also saw only 218 Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*, while during the earlier count, ten thousands were reported. What could be the reason for this sudden drop in its number in four years? According to Perwez and other sources, Pawapuri Tank is being maintained for the last many decades and there is not much change in the bird numbers. So, what happened to ten thousand Pintails, 1000 Common Teals *A. creca*, 2750 Greylag Geese *Anser anser*, 255 Barheaded Geese *A. indica* and 1000 White-fronted Geese *A. albifrons*? During 1988 Pawapuri Tank must have been abundantly rich in fish and frogs to feed 300 Great Crested Grebes *Podiceps cristatus*? My observations show that the Great Crested Grebe is highly territorial and habitat specific i.e. needs clear water to dive for food. So, how did 300 Grebes manage to forage in a 16.4 hectare waterlily-filled tank!

It is clear that the species and census figures of Powapuri Tank in 1988 were wrong (Table 1). Was someone fooling us by giving wrong data to see our verification system? I think in the future, compilers/editors of Asian Waterfowl Census should be more discreet in accepting data. We should not encourage people at the expense of science.

Unfortunately, Pawapuri is not the only case. As we analyze the census data of AWC, we find many discrepancies and wrong observations. For example, in Kuntur Tank in Karnataka only 2 Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanica* and 3 Spotbilled Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis* were seen and nothing else, while in another tank in the same state, 2100 Spot-billed Ducks *Anas poecilorhyncha* and 4700 Lesser Whistling Ducks (Teals) were reported. How did a waterbody which was suitable for two thousand Spot-billed Ducks and nearly five thousand Whistling Ducks not attract any Pintail or Shoveller? Was the census done in summer when migratory waterfowl are absent? During my 20 years of bird watching, I have never seen any waterbody which is suitable only for Spot-billed and Whistling ducks and not for other waterfowl.

While doing research on the distribution of Blacknecked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*, I found that in the 1986-87 winter count, 20 of these storks were reported from Sakhya Sagar lake of Madhav National Park in Shivpuri district. Between 1982 and 1988, I must have visited this Park at least 50 times but I never saw more than a pair of these storks. The Blacknecked Storks are highly territorial and even in Keoladeo National park at Bharatpur, which has some of the best marshes in India (consisting 8.5 sq.kn), not more than 4-5 pairs are found, most birds are seen widely separated from each other. Sakhya Sagar and Chandpatha lakes of Madhav National Park are deep and only narrow margins having shallow waters are suitable for wading birds, so where were all these storks present?

Puzzled by the discovery of 20 Blacknecked Stork at one site, I inquired from the then Director, Mr. Manoj Misra, who is a good birdwatcher. He wrote to me that as far as he remembers, no one came to do bird count on the designated day, and secondly he did not see any Blacknecked Stork in his Park during the period when 20 were reported to be present.

By pointing out these mistakes, I do not want to discredit the importance of annual waterfowl count. I think it is playing a very important role in generating interest in wildlife conservation and we should encourage more people to participate. In order to collect scientific and systematic data which is of some use to ornithologists I have a few recommendations.

1. For annual waterfowl counts, India should be subdivided into regions, and regional coordinators

and every participant should send the data to him/her. The regional coordinator should cross-check the data before they are submitted to the national coordinator.

2. Questionable data should not be published.
3. Every participant should clearly describe the habitat type and the size of the wetland. A good description of habitat can give some idea about the species likely to occur there.
4. Some funds should be provided to regional coordinators to survey important wetlands in their areas.
5. The Asian Wetland Bureau should organize a workshop of amateur birdwatchers to teach them bird identification and census techniques.
6. People who repeatedly or intentionally give wrong data should be excluded from the waterfowl count.

Table 1: Comparison of 1988 and 1992 census

Common Name	Scientific Name	Number seen in	
		1988	1992
Great crested grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	300	Nil
Little grebe	<i>Podiceps ruficollis</i>	375	6
Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>	Nil	10
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Nil	6
Intermediate Heron	<i>Egretta intermedia</i>	Nil	2
Large Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	Nil	5
Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Nil	28
Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>	65	Nil
Whitefronted goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>	1000	Nil
Greylag goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	2750	Nil
Barheaded goose	<i>Anser indicus</i>	255	Nil
Large Whistling teal	<i>Dendrocygna bicolor</i>	170	23
Lesser Whistling teal	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>	Nil	2,364
Marbled teal	<i>Marmarometta angustirostris</i>	300	Nil
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	10,000	218
Shoveller	<i>Anas chryseata</i>	Nil	163
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	1,000	Nil
Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	Nil	172
Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>	177	7
Redcrested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>	200	Nil
Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	1,000	27
White-eyed Pochard	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	500	Nil
Scaup Duck	<i>Aythya marila</i>	305	Nil
Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	575	Nil
Whitebreasted Waterhen	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>	178	Nil
Water Cock	<i>Gallicrex cinerea</i>	500	Nil
Purple Moorhen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	Nil	7
Indian Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Nil	8
Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	5,000	22
Bronze-winged Jacana	<i>Metopidius indicus</i>	Nil	8
Redwattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>	Nil	12
Grey-headed Lapwing	<i>Vanellus cinereus</i>	75	Nil
Yellow-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>	80	Nil
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	73	Nil
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	100	18
Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	50	Nil
River Tern	<i>Sterna aurantia</i>	65	Nil
Little Tern	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>	129	Nil
Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandwicensis</i>	45	Nil
Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Nil	1

CHECKLIST OF THE BIRDS OF KOTA DISTRICT IN SOUTH-EAST RAJASTHAN

RAKESH VYAS, 2-P-22, Vigyan Nagar, Kota 324 005

This checklist is the result of last five years of extensive bird watching in Kota district. During this period well over 400 field trips were undertaken to the wetlands, forested areas and sanctuaries situated in Kota district. This work was taken up to establish a base, as there is no published or unpublished work available on the avifauna of South East Rajasthan. The study area is located on Milwa plateau with semiarid, arid desert in the west, alluvial flood plains in the north and deccan plateau in the south.

Climatically the forests of Kota district should be tropical dry deciduous forest but due to large scale tree felling, grazing and changing precipitation pattern the uncultivated land area is either barren or thorn and scrub jungle with predominantly *Acacia* and *Zizyphus* bushes. The sanctuaries and protected areas can still be classified as dry deciduous forest, but they too are threatened by illegal quarrying and tree cutting for cheap wood, firewood and fodder. Chambal River runs through Kota district and it is fed by numerous streams and tributaries which are seasonal and stop running after monsoon. Every village in the area has natural or man-made tanks, which played an important role in hydrological cycle. There are two major dams on Chambal River in Kota district and some small dams on its tributaries. The waterbodies and reed beds formed close to canals attract a large variety of resident and migratory waterfowl.

I have been able to record 225 bird species so far. This include 78 migratory and 147 resident species. The sighting of 5 vagrants namely *Aegyptius monachus*, *Circus melanoleucos*, *Pluvialis dominica*, *Vanellus spinosus* and *Corvus corax subcorax* is worth mentioning. The birds having affinity with East African stock are found in the scrub jungles of the study area and they are represented by *Turdoides* spp., *Eremopteryx nigriceps*, *Francolinus pondicerianus*, *Merops* spp., *Galerida deva*, *Circumala fusca* and *Phylloscopus* spp. The bird species like *Phonocopterus roseus*, *Larus* spp., *Pelecanus* spp. and *Esacus magnirostris recurvirostra* which are often associated with salt pans, tidal mudflats, coastal and brackish waters are also seen in the area. *E. magnirostris recurvirostra* is a resident breeding bird living and nesting on rocky, dried tank beds during late summer and early monsoon months.

Since the checklist was typed, three more bird species were recorded. They are given below in continuous serial number but not in their proper systematic spot.

223. INDIAN YELLOW LEGGED BUTTON QUAIL

- *Turnix tanki*

224. INDIAN STREAKED WREN WARBLER

- *Prinia gracilis*

225. INDIAN WHITE-EYE

- *Zosterops palpebrosa palpebrosa*.

Checklist of the Birds of KOTA District

Migratory			M
Rare (less than 5 sightings)			R
Occasional (less than 25 sightings)			O
Present (frequently seen in small number)			P
Abundant (frequently seen in large number)			A
Vagrant			V
001 Great Crested Gebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>		MP
002 Little Grebe	<i>P. ruficollis</i>		P
003 White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>		MP
004 Dalmatian Pelican	<i>P. philippensis</i>		MR
005 Large Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		MA
006 Indian Shag	<i>P. fuscicollis</i>		PM
007 Little Cormorant	<i>P. niger</i>		A
008 Darter	<i>Anhinga rufa</i>		O
009 Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		P
010 Purple Heron	<i>A. purpurea</i>		P
011 Large Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>		P
012 Median Egret	<i>E. intermedia</i>		P
013 Little Egret	<i>E. garzetta</i>		A
014 Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcas ibis</i>		A
015 Little Green Heron	<i>Butorides striatus</i>		R
016 Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>		A
017 Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>		P
018 Chestnut Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus cinnamomeus</i>		O
019 Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>		P
020 Openbill Stork	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>		P
021 Whitenecked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>		P
022 White Stork	<i>C. ciconia</i>		MR
023 Black Stork	<i>C. nigra</i>		R
024 Black Necked Stork	<i>Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus</i>		R
025 White Ibis	<i>Threskiornis aethiopia</i>		P
026 Indian Black Ibis	<i>Pseudibis papillosa</i>		A
027 Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>		R
028 Spoonbill	<i>Platelea leucordia</i>		A
029 Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>		MR
030 Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>		MR
031 Barheaded Goose	<i>Anser indicus</i>		MA
032 Lesser Whistling Teal	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>		P
033 Brahmini Duck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>		MP
034 Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>		MA
035 Common Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>		MA
036 Spotbill Duck	<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>		P
037 Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		MR
038 Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>		MO
039 Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>		MO
040 Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>		MP
041 Shoveller	<i>Anas clypeata</i>		MA
042 Red Crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>		MR
043 Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>		MA
044 Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>		MR
045 Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>		MA

046	Cotton Teal	<i>Nettapus coromandelianus</i>	P	107	Indian Courser	<i>Cursorius coromandelicus</i>	O
047	Nakta	<i>Sarkidiornis melanotos</i>	A	108	Swallow Plover	<i>Glareola lactea</i>	R
048	Blackwinged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	A	109	Great Black Headed Gull	<i>Larus ichthyaeus</i>	MP
049	Pariah Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	A	110	Brown Headed Gull	<i>Larus brunnicephalus</i>	MP
050	Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>	P	111	Blackheaded Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	MP
051	Imperial Eagle	<i>Aquila heliaca</i>	MR	112	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>	A
052	Tawny Eagle	<i>Aquila rapax</i>	O	113	River Tern	<i>Sterna aurantia</i>	A
053	King Vulture	<i>Sarcogyps calvus</i>	O	114	Little Tern	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>	O
054	Cinereous Vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>	MV	115	Indian Skimmer	<i>Rynchops albigollis</i>	O
055	Longbilled Vulture	<i>Cyps indius</i>	A	116	Indian Sand Grouse	<i>Pterocles exustus</i>	A
056	Whitebacked Vulture	<i>Cyps bengalensis</i>	A	117	Painted Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles indicus</i>	P
057	Scavenger Vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	A	118	Yellow Legged Green Pigeon	<i>Treron phoenicoptera</i>	O
058	Pale Harrier	<i>Circus macrourus</i>	MR	119	Blue Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	A
059	Pied Harrier	<i>Circus melanoleucos</i>	MV	120	Indian Ring Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	A
060	Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	MP	121	Red Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia tranquebarica</i>	P
061	Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>	R	122	Spotted Dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>	P
062	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	MR	123	Little Brown Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	A
063	Short Toed Eagle	<i>Circus gallicus</i>	P	124	Rose Ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	A
064	Redheaded Merlin	<i>Falco chicquera</i>	O	125	Blossom Headed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>	P
065	Indian Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	MO	126	Alexandrine Parakeet	<i>Pittacula eupatria</i>	R
066	Grey Partridge	<i>Francolinus pondicerianus</i>	A	127	Pied Crested Cuckoo	<i>Clamator jacobinus</i>	MO
067	Jungle Bush Quail	<i>Perdica asiatica</i>	A	128	Brainfever Bird	<i>Cuculus varius</i>	P
068	Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>	A	129	Indian Plaintive Cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus passerinus</i>	P
069	Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>	MR	130	Koel	<i>Eudynamis scolopacea</i>	P
070	Sarus Crane	<i>Grus antigone</i>	P	131	Sirkeer Cuckoo	<i>Taccocua leschenaultii</i>	R
071	Demoiselle Crane	<i>Anthropoides virgo</i>	MR	132	Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>	P
072	Slatybreasted Rail	<i>Rallus striatus</i>	R	133	Indian Great Horned Owl	<i>Bubo bubo</i>	O
073	White Breasted Waterhen	<i>Anaouornis phoenicurus</i>	A	134	Barred Jungle Owlet	<i>Glaucidium radiatum</i>	O
074	Indian Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	P	135	Spotted Owlet	<i>Athene brama</i>	P
075	Purple Moorhen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	A	136	Common Indian Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus asiaticus</i>	P
076	Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	MA	137	House Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	P
077	Great Indian Bustard	<i>Choriotis nigriceps</i>	R	138	Small Blue Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	P
078	Pheasant Tailed Jacana	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>	A	139	Storkbilled Kingfisher	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>	O
079	Bronze Winged Jacana	<i>Melopidius indicus</i>	A	140	Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>	P
080	White Tailed Plover	<i>Vanellus leucurus</i>	Mo	141	White Breasted Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>	A
081	Red Wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>	A	142	Green Bee Eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>	A
082	Yellow Wattled	<i>Lapwing Vanellus malabaricus</i>	O	143	Bluetailed Bee Eater	<i>Merops philippinus</i>	P
083	Spurwinged Lapwing	<i>Vanellus spinosus</i>	MV	144	Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>	P
084	Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis dominica</i>	MV	145	Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	P
085	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	A	146	Grey Hornbill	<i>Tockus birostris</i>	O
086	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	MO	147	Coppersmith	<i>Megalaima haemacephala</i>	P
087	Curlew	<i>Numerius arquata</i>	MP	148	Mahratta Woodpecker	<i>Picoides mahrattensis</i>	P
088	Blacktailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	MP	149	Golden Backed Woodpecker	<i>Dinopium benghalensis</i>	O
089	Bar Tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	MO	150	Pigmy Woodpecker	<i>Picoides nanus</i>	P
090	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	MP	151	Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	O
091	Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	MA	152	Redwinged Bushlark	<i>Mirafra erythroptera</i>	A
092	Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	MP	153	Black Crowned Finch Lark	<i>Eremopterix nigriceps</i>	A
093	Green Shank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	MP	154	Rufoustailed Finch Lark	<i>Ammomanes phoenicurus</i>	A
094	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	MP	155	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	O
095	Spotted Greenshank	<i>Tringa guttifer</i>	MO	156	Short Toed Lark	<i>Calandrella cinerea</i>	P
096	Common Sand Piper	<i>Tringa hypoleucos</i>	MA	157	Indian Small Skylark	<i>Alauda gulgula</i>	O
097	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	MA	158	Dusky Crag Martin	<i>I hirundo concolor</i>	P
098	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	MA	159	Wiretailed Swallow	<i>Hirundo smithii</i>	A
099	Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>	MA	160	Redrumped Swallow	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>	P
100	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris testacea</i>	MR	161	Cliff Swallow	<i>Hirundo fluviicola</i>	O
101	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	MA	162	Indian Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>	P
102	Painted Snipe	<i>Rostratula benghalensis</i>	P	163	Baybacked Shrike	<i>Lanius vittatus</i>	P
103	Black Winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	A	164	Rufousbacked Shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>	P
104	Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avocetta</i>	MR	165	Wood Shrike	<i>Tephrodornis pondicerianus</i>	O
105	Stone Curlew	<i>Burhinus oedipnemus</i>	P	166	Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	P
106	Great Stone Plover	<i>Esacus magnirostris</i>	P				

167	Indian Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>	A	195	Chiff Chaff	<i>Phylloscopus spp</i>	MO
168	Indian White Bellied Drongo	<i>Dicrurus carulescens</i>	R	196	Blue Throat	<i>Erythacus suecicus</i>	MO
169	Brahminy Myna	<i>Sturnus pagodarum</i>	A	197	Magpie Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>	P
170	Rosy Pastor	<i>Sturnus roseus</i>	MA	198	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochrurus</i>	MA
171	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	MA	199	Plumbeous Redstart	<i>Rhyacornis fuliginosus</i>	MA
172	Pied Myna	<i>Sturnus contra</i>	A	200	Indian Robin	<i>Saxicoloides fulicata</i>	A
173	Indian Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	A	201	Brown Rockchat	<i>Cercomela fusca</i>	A
174	Bank Myna	<i>Acridotheres ginginianus</i>	A	202	Indian Collared Bushchat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	MA
175	Tree Pie	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>	O	203	Pied Buschart	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>	MA
176	House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>	A	204	Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	MP
177	Jungle Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchus</i>	P	205	Pied Chat	<i>Oenanthe picata</i>	MA
178	Punjab Raven	<i>Corvus corax subcorax</i>	MV	206	Bluie Rockthrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	MR
179	Large Cuckoo Shrike	<i>Coracina novaehollandiae</i>	O	207	Indian Grey Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	O
180	Smaller Grey Cuckoo Shrike	<i>Coracina melaschistos</i>	O	208	Paddyfield Pipit	<i>Anthus novaeseelandiae</i>	MO
181	Small Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>	O	209	Greyheaded Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	MA
182	Whitecheeked Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus leucogenys</i>	O	210	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>	MA
183	Red Vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	A	211	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla capsaica</i>	MA
184	Yellow Eyed Babbler	<i>Chrysomma sinense</i>	P	212	Indian White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	MA
185	Common Babbler	<i>Turdoides caudatus</i>	A	213	Large Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla maderaspatensis</i>	MA
186	Large Grey Babbler	<i>Turdoides malcomi</i>	P	214	Purple Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia asiatica</i>	P
187	Jungle Babbler	<i>Turdoides striatus</i>	P	215	Indian House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	A
188	Redbreasted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa subrubra</i>	MR	216	Yellow Throated Sparrow	<i>Passer xanthocollis</i>	A
189	Whitebrowed Fantail Flycatcher	<i>Rhipidura aureola</i>	P	217	Indian Baya	<i>Ploceus philippinus</i>	A
190	Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>	O	218	Red Munia	<i>Estrilda amandava</i>	P
191	Ashy Wren Warbler	<i>Prinia socialis</i>	P	219	White Throated Munia	<i>Lonchura malabarica</i>	A
192	Indian Wren Warbler	<i>Prinia subflava</i>	P	220	Blackheaded Bunting	<i>Emberiza melanocephala</i>	MO
193	Tailor Bird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>	P	221	Red Headed Bunting	<i>Emberiza bruniceps</i>	MO
194	Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus stentoreus</i>	MR	222	Crested Bunting	<i>Melophus lathami</i>	O

BIJANA PEEPUL : A NEW BREEDING SITE FOR PAINTED STORK DISCOVERED IN DELHI REGION

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and

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‘Not all but some transformed into flowers
How many other faces perished in the dust’
— Ghalib

Among Ciconiiformes — the conservationally important group of colonial waterbirds — nesting for at least 15 species is recorded from the Delhi region (Ganguli, 1975). Hitherto, the Delhi Zoo was thought to be the only well established breeding ground for Painted Stork (*Mycteria leucocephala*) in this region (Urfi, 1992). Besides wild storks, several species of heron, egret and cormorant have been regularly nesting here since 1960. However, from recent field work in the environs of Delhi we have discovered another breeding colony of Painted Stork — on a large Peepul (*Ficus religiosa*) tree near Bijana village in Sonipat district of Haryana. In this note we discuss its conservational significance.

Bijana, approximately 25 km by road from Sonipat, is located very close to the Jawaharlal Nehru Canal (J.N.L. Feeder) which is a branch of the Western Yamuna Canal. The particular peepul which interests us (i.e., on which Painted Storks nest) is owned by a Mr. Maha Singh of the village and is barely a km away from the canal and from the village. The tree stands in the middle of a large paddy field and has a cluster of Accacia trees at its base. When we visited this site on 2 September 1992, we saw about 50 Painted Storks, 10 White Ibis and several cormorants. The storks had already commenced nesting as at least 5 occupied nests were seen. On a second visit on 20 September, we could discern at least 40 nests and a roost

count (at about 6 p.m.) revealed about 100 adult storks on the tree.

We were informed about the Bijana Peepul by the villagers while doing an ornithological survey of the wetlands of Sonapat district (for details see our article in the *Newsletter* Vol.32, May-June 1992). The people of Bijana told us that Painted Storks had been regularly nesting on this tree for *ca* 50 years. On being asked to explain their 'attitude' towards the heronry most of the village folk we interviewed displayed neutrality. However, some felt that this Peepul would die prematurely because the birds droppings inhibited the growth of leaves. Others resented the foul and fishy smells emanating from the stork colony.

The discovery of the Bijana Peepul — now the second, known Painted Stork colony in the Delhi region — raises two obvious issues. Firstly, the hint of a possibility that there will be more nesting sites for colonially breeding Ciconiiforms in this region. In a certain sense the couplet by Ghalib, cited above, is an oblique reference to the many more heronries — lying tucked away in remote, sleepy hamlets — awaiting discovery by field workers; these discoveries will result in a considerably updated perspective on the status of wetland birds in this ornithologically important area. Secondly, and importantly, is the issue of conservation i.e. what can We/Haryana Government's Wild Life Department/local environmental NGO's do about it? That there is much intrinsic worth in preserving this tree cannot be doubted because nesting sites for storks and other colonial waterbirds are too few and fast disappearing. But what we have to guard against is threats to this stork colony. S. Sridhar, in a recent issue of the *Newsletter* (Vol.32, No.1&2 Jan-Feb, 1992) reports that a large tree, which was the traditional nesting site for Spotbilled Pelican (*Pelecanus*

philippensis) in the Kokre Bellur Pelicanery (Karnataka) was cut down in 1985, following a dispute in ownership status. Obviously, we are anxious that a similar tragedy does not occur here.

It is interesting to note that the stork colony in question is on a Peepul — a tree that is generally protected in India an account of the considerable religious sentiment in its favour. Similarly, many other heronries in India are also located on Peepul trees, a case in point being the heronries of Bhavnagar, Gujarat (Parasharya and Naik, 1990). But is the Bijana Peepul safe? Perhaps it would be wise on the part of the concerned authorities to take the necessary steps which would ensure the safe nesting of birds on this tree. Meanwhile, through the silky haze of September afternoons, as we watch this colony come alive to flutter of wings and clanking of mandibles, preparation of a conservation action plan (by us) is underway. Suggestions or comments from the readers would be particularly welcome at this stage.

Acknowledgment

One of us (AJU) is grateful to CSIR for the award of a research associateship.

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About Indian Birds

by
Laeq Futehally
&
Salim Ali

Illustrated by D.V. Cowen

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AN UNUSUAL NEST SITE OF THE INDIAN TAILOR BIRD

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That the tailor bird (*Orthotomus sutorius*) places the nest — "cup of soft fibres, cotton wool and vegetable down" in "a funnel fashioned by cleverly holding over and stitching along edges of one or more plaint leaves" (Ali, S., 1979) is familiar to the bird watchers. The bird is said to be partial to broad-leaved plants although occasionally under certain situations narrow leaves have also been found to be used (Ali, S. and Ripley, 1987).

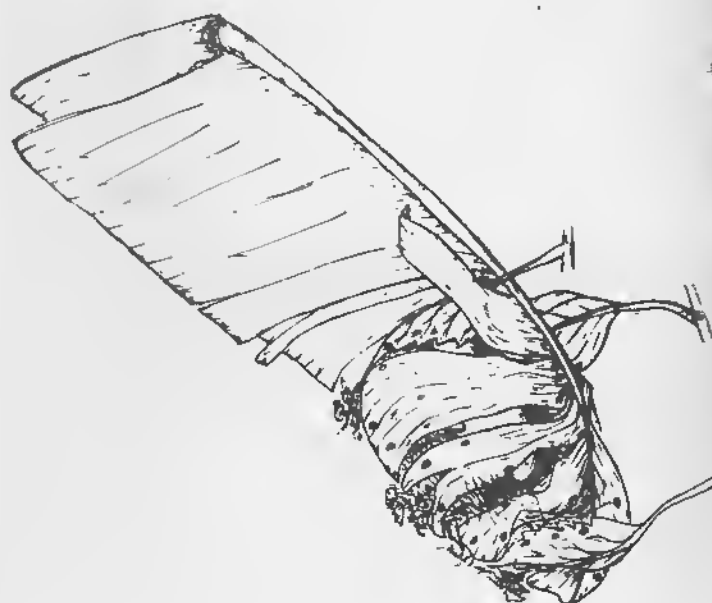
On 12th January, 1987 I came across a nest of the bird in a strange setting; a live banana leaf and hibiscus leaves formed the frame work. The far free tip of a plantain leaf was the main frame within which had been placed the cup of fibres and the cotton-wool bed. The two lateral planes of the leaf-tip had been bent up towards the under surface and stitched to the cup. To prevent it from being tossed excessively in the wind three adjacent downwardly directed broad leaves of a hibiscus bush had been stitched to the cup at intervals between the torn portions of the banana leaf. The edges of the separate leaves of the hibiscus had not been stitched together, though the stitches were along the individual edges of the broad leaves. In the banana leaf itself the stitch-holes were along the rounded edge and through the middle of the torn sections of the leaf. The arched banana leaf provided an umbrella cover, and the hibiscus leaves, the anchor. The nest itself was not quite visible outside because of the dip of the banana leaf tip into the hibiscus plant and of the broad entrance to the nest facing the base of the banana leaf.

On 18th February 1992, I had the second opportunity, now about 200 metres from the first, of witnessing an attempt at nesting by a female tailor bird in a banana leaf-tip about 3 metres from the ground. She made several unsuccessful attempts at bringing the lateral edges of the leaf tip to a desired position. The failure was perhaps partly due to the absence of an extra perch nearby to work from. My earlier suspicion that the first bird might have placed the cup first within the cone of three hibiscus leaves before incorporating the banana leaf with it could not be sustained now for the fact of the second bird having tried to make one directly in the banana leaf itself. If the nest had been first placed in the cone of three hibiscus leaves there was no need for the incorporation of the banana leaf at all; to have done so would have been a waste of time and energy. That in the first instance the nest-cup had been placed first in the banana-leaf frame is inferred from the fact that the hibiscus leaves used had their edges stitched far apart on the cup.

The versatility in the nesting site and method must be a contributory factor for the success of the unique asiatic bird common in the wild and the urban environment. The nesting site would be of high protective value, being out of reach of the "crow pheasant, rodents, cats, mongooses, lizards, snakes, etc." which inflict heavy mortality on the bird at all stages of development. It would be hard for the parasitic bird to keep itself steady while trying to drop an egg within the cup. A disadvantage is that the activities of nidification and breeding should be completed within the life span of the annual plant; in fact the first nest was detected only at the harvesting of the plantain tree and the entire brood of three half-grown nestlings was lost. It is a subtle evolutionary point to clarify if the nesting behaviour is a localized deviation from that of the other populations of the bird elsewhere in India and of other species of the genus.

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CORRESPONDENCE

BREEDING OF THE PURPLE MOORHEN IN 'KOLE' WETLAND, INDIA. P.K. RAVINDRAN, Vallisseri, P.O. Avinissery, Thrissur 680 313

The 'Kole' Wetlands of Trichur and Malappuram districts of Kerala, spreading over 15,000 hectares in area, harbour one of the largest congregation of waterfowl in this State. The whole area is submerged from June to December; in January, water is pumped out and a crop of paddy is raised in the swamp. Reeds and grass grow at many parts of this area making it an ideal habitat of the Rallidae family, especially the Purple Moorhen.

The Purple Moorhen *Porphyrio porphyrio* is seen all round the year in some parts of the 'Kole' such as Enamavu (Trichur Dt.) where I have seen groups of 50 or more individuals in the months of April and May. But at Biyyam (Malappuram Dt.) large number of these birds are seen only in the monsoon months.

According to 'Birds of Kerala', (Ali, S., 1969, p.100) breeding season of the Purple Moorhen is in July and August. The statement was based on the observations of H.S. Ferguson in the late nineteenth century (JBNHS: 16, p.6) but since then, there had not been any further evidence to substantiate this record. C. Sasikumar, on 15.1.1989 had observed a pair of adult Purple Moorhens accompanied by a dark brown downy chick at Kattampally, Kannur Dt. (JBNHS in press); he could not find any nests there. So I think it is relevant to place on record my discovery of some nests of this species at Biyyam, near Ponnani of Malappuram dt.

On 10th July 1992, Sethumdhavan, C.P. and myself saw some Purple Moorhens amongst reeds at the above place. They were uttering a variety of harsh call notes — kwa — kwa — kwa; Kirr—kirrr—kirrr—kir..... etc. and were seen chasing one another. On 23 August, as I was crossing an innundated swamp by boat, I saw some Purple Moorhens flying out of a dense growth of grass and reeds. On searching this patch, I saw three nests. They were large shallow pads of grass stems firmly interwoven amongst grass and weeds above water level. I saw two more nests on 30 August these nests were found to be deeper than those seen earlier.

The number of eggs varied from 4 to 6. They were oval in shape, pointed towards one end, pale yellowish stone coloured with deep brown and dull purple blotches and spots. These markings were denser at the broad end. I saw a total of 26 eggs in these five nests.

The eggs measure between 5 and 3.6 cm in length, and 3 and 2.2 cm in breadth.

On 10 September, again at Biyyam, I found another nest with four eggs and a chick. This downy chick was black in colour, had deep flesh coloured legs, whitish bill with red base, whitish shield on forehead. The chick was hiding in the grass near the nest as we approached by boat. As it saw us, it swam towards the boat; but later it hid among the grass once again.

These birds are facing severe threat in the 'Kole' wetlands. Hundreds are being killed by poachers; eggs are collected by grass cutters. At this rate, the Purple Moorhen may become extinct in this area in a short time from now.

SIGHTING OF THE LITTLE GULL *LARUS MINUTUS PALLAS* AT BHAVNAGAR NEW PORT, GUJARAT. B.M. PARASHARYA and K.L. MATHEW, AICRP on Agricultural Ornithology, Gujarat Agricultural University, Anand 388110 and N.C. BHAT 24, Bank Society, Subhashnagar, Bhavnagar 364 001

We conducted a census of coastal marine birds at New Port, situated 10 km SW from Bhavnagar city (21.46 N, 72.11 E) on Gulf of Khambhat on January 12, 1992 in the morning. A group of 88 gulls was noticed resting within the dock area just 50 m away, occasionally taking off and again settling back either on the water or on a big drainage pipe line. During examination of the gulls (using 12 X binoculars), we found them to be Brownheaded Gull (*Larus brunnicephalus*). Among the gulls sitting in a row on the pipe line we observed 3 gulls distinctively smaller than Brownheaded gulls. We fixed our spotting scope (Optolyth TBG 80, 20 X wide angle eye piece) for careful examination. The gulls in question had black bills and an indistinct spot behind the eye, light grey on the wings, and white on rest of the body parts but were half the size of *L. brunnicephalus*. Size comparison was easy since they were sitting side by side in a row. It became clear that these unknown gulls were quite distinct. Meanwhile all the gulls took off and flew around during which its tail pattern could be seen. The square tail was pure white in two of the birds whereas third one had a black transverse band towards the end indicating that it was a juvenile. Moreover, there was no wing mirror in any of these three. These characters were also different from the accompanying *L. brunnicephalus*. After circling a few times the gulls settled on the water. The tail pattern (shape) and ability to swim easily with other gulls indicated that it was certainly a gull species and not any tern species. On the spot we compared the characters with the picture given by Ali and Ripley (1983) and Peterson *et al.* (1974) and identified them as Little Gulls *Larus minutus* Pallas. Apart from anything else, no other gull species is so small in size.

According to Ali and Ripley (1983), the Little Gull is an accidental vagrant in our subcontinent and so far only one

specimen has been collected from Ladakh by Walter Koelz. Magrath (1910) saw a small gull off Bombay harbour which could possibly be a Little Gull. However, Ali (1974) saw flocks of this species in the Great Runn of Kachchh and said that he had seen this gull during his earlier visits to Kachchh during 1956, 1957 and 1960 but had not reported it because it was not known to occur within our limits and a museum specimen could not be collected for supporting such observations. However, the characters noted by him were sufficient to reveal their identity. During our attempts to identify this gull, we were guided by its pictures also. After Ali (1974), this is the second record of Little Gull from Gujarat and this establishes that it may be a regular visitor to the coastal region of Gujarat but had been overlooked.

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OBSERVATIONS IN SHOLUR VALLEY (NILGIRIS). DR ARUNACHALAM KUMAR, Professor of Anatomy, KMC, Mangalore 575 001

Situated flush west of the fringes of the Mudumalai sanctuary, the Sholur Valley is a verdant pristine retreat fecund in biodiversity. Dense sholas carpet the sheer ridges that enclose the "U" shaped sloping vale. Hundreds of acres of tea plantations intersperse the scenario, populated by two hamlets, Kokkal and Kannerimook. The crescentic range forms an important link in extending the Nigiri Biosphere into three states, Kerala, Karnataka and Tamilnadu. The valley mouth faces Bokkapura, wedged between Singara and Segur, which form it's northern and southern walls. The Singara-Bokkapuram-Segur belt, situated at the open ends of the "U", constitute an important corridor to transit of elephant populations that migrate between the eastern and western Ghats.

From Bokkapuram, the Sholur valley rises in a steep gradient between two massive mountains, the northern ridge being home to some toda settlements. The mist enveloped perimeter of the valley rises to about 2,000 to 2,500 + mts. The offshoots of Pykara river, supplemented by natural springs moisten the sholas, well enough even in scorching summer, to attract an occasional foray by

elephant herds thirsting for water from the Bandipur-Mudumalai zone.

Over the past 10 years, I have made biannual retreats into this pristine valley, spending a languid dawn or dusk, birdwatching.

Avifauna is diverse here, and I have listed more than 75 species, within a kilometer square of my quarters, half a mile from Kannerimook. However, I could list only 3 species of raptors: the Scavenger Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*), one sighting, Shikra (*Accipiter badius*) and Black-winged Kite, both often. The presence of these birds at these high elevations, 2,000 mts plus, is unusual in Peninsular India. Probably, they are ferried into the rarified elevations by thermals that rise from the Moyar plateau, a scarce 7-8 km, as the crow flies.

Salim Ali notes that the Shikra has been spotted at 2,300 mts, whilst the other raptors, have not, to my knowledge, been reported at these tremendous elevations.

Among the other birds that have been sighted only once, are the Red Spurfowl (*Galliperdix spadicea*), Indian Eagle Owl (*Bubo bubo*), Paradise Flycatcher (*Terpsiphone paradisi*), Red Breasted Flycatcher (*Ficedula parva*), Blackbird (*Turdus merula*), Red Avadavat (*Amandava amandava*) at nest, etc.

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**PARTICIPATE IN
ASIAN MID-WINTER WATERFOWL CENSUS
8 to 24 - JANUARY 1993**

PHASIANIDAE IN NORTH MADHYA PRADESH. RAJIV SAXENA, M.I.G.-853, Darpan Colony, Thatipur, Gwalior 474 011 (M.P.)

Ali (1939) found eight species of birds belonging to the family Phasianidae in the area which is now known as Gwalior and Chambal divisions in north Madhya Pradesh. Long after this survey, Mitra (1979), Sharma and Singh (1989) prepared checklists of birds of National Chambal Sanctuary in Morena district. They saw six and two species of Phasianidae respectively. But their works were limited to the ravines of loamy and sandy loam soils, and concentrated mostly on wetland birds. Notable sightings in Mitra's work was that of Black Partridge which was not seen by Ali (1939) in this area. Rahmani (1991) saw not only Black Partridge but also seven other species of Pheasants in Karera Bustard Sanctuary in Shivpuri district.

During all these studies only Ali (1939) saw Painted Spurfowl while Red Spurfowl was found by none of them. I have been visiting different parts of north Madhya Pradesh for last many years, and I always noted down the birds seen by me. I have seen Red Spurfowl and Painted Spurfowl in Madhav National Park in Shivpuri district. I also had two glimpses of Spurfowl species from a moving jeep in Kuno area in Morena district but could not identify the species as it was dusk. In all, ten species of Pheasants have been identified so far in this area (Table 1).

The reconfirmation of the presence of three of them in this region in recent years is significant because the area falls in the southern limit of distribution in the case of Black Partridge; in the northern limit in the case of Painted Partridge, while this region forms a part of western limit in the case of Painted Spurfowl.

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Table 1
Phasianidae in North Madhya Pradesh

Species	Ali 1939	Mitra 1979	Sharma & Singh 1986	Rah- mani 1991	Pre- sent study
1. Black partridge <i>Francolinus francolinus</i>	-	+	-	+	-
2. Grey Partridge <i>F. Pondicerianus</i>	+	+	+	+	+
3. Painted Partridge <i>F. pictus</i>	+	-	-	+	+
4. Common Quail <i>Corturnix corturnix</i>	+	+	-	+	+
5. Blackbreasted Quail <i>C. cormandelica</i>	+	+	-	+	-
6. Jungle Bush Quail <i>Pedicularia asiatica</i>	+	+	-	+	+
7. Rock Bush Quail <i>P. argoondah</i>	+	-	-	+	+
8. Red Spurfowl <i>Galloperox spadicea</i>	-	-	-	-	+
9. Painted Spurfowl <i>G. lunulata</i>	+	-	-	-	+
10. Common Peafowl <i>Pavo cristatus</i>	+	+	+	+	+

Keys - Present: + ; Absent: -

NOTES ON ADAYAR ESTUARY, HOBBY, FOREST WAGTAIL AND WOODPECKERS. V. SANTHARAM, C/o Dr. A.S. Easa, KFRI, Peechi 680 653 (Kerala)

Adayar Estuary

In the July-August 1992 issue of the 'Newsletter', Mr. B. Rajasekhar has made a mention about the Adayar Estuary. He has suggested that the decline in the birdlife of the estuary area is "mainly due to the denotification of the sanctuary, thus allowing for an increase in poaching and fishing activities". He then gives a list of birds with maximum numbers seen in 1992 (presumably from January to April). I have the following comments on this topic.

While it is probably true that there is a decline in the birdlife at the estuary, I would rather be cautious about concluding this from one season's data. Numbers of waterbirds may fluctuate from one year to another and reasons for this need not necessarily be related to conditions at the site under study. Several extraneous factors may be responsible for these fluctuations such as availability or non-availability of alterna

conditions in the breeding grounds, droughts etc. Only long-term monitoring of birds could give a correct picture about the trends in the populations and suitability of the site for birds. The figures given show that the numbers have not drastically declined and are more or less the average numbers seen in a normal year. Only in the case of Blackwinged Stilts (725), there appears to be a significant decline (about 1500–2000 birds are seen in normal years). The figure given for Little Ringed Plover is quite high and I suspect several 'Sand Plovers' have been counted as 'Little Ringed Plovers'. The figures for Pond Herons and common Sandpipers are ridiculously low and there must have been a serious counting error somewhere! I must also point out that oystercatchers and flamingoes are some of the uncommon birds seen here and have been recorded only in certain years. Curlews are usually seen here in the Autumn migration.

As far as poaching and fishing are concerned, I would like to say that these activities have always been there whether the area was notified as a protected area or not. The notification of the estuary as a protected site merely existed in papers and on a few display boards put up along the roads and has never had an impact on the fishing and poaching activities. I personally don't think fishing activity could have an adverse effect on the birdlife except for causing occasional disturbances by the movements of the fishermen.

It is true that the proposed constructions in the open meadows are going to affect a number of species that nested here. (In fact, disturbances caused by cricket players and other people over the past few years had greatly reduced the breeding chances of the ground nesters like lapwings, larks, pipits and stone curlews). It will also remove from the Adayar bird list several migrants that visited the open grounds such as Kestrels, Wagtails, Brown Shrike and Short-toed larks. Another scheme of the Madras Metropolitan Development Authority (MMDA) which plans to "develop about 45 acres in the Adayar Creek area ..." (The Hindu, August 19, 1992) to accommodate an office and amusement complex is sure to affect the birdlife in the estuary. However, the October, 1992 issue of "The Bulletin of the Madras Naturalists' Society" says the estuary continues to be a protected area with the Forest Department extending the notification period. Whether this will stall the proposed development scheme, estimated to cost "at a little over Rs.40 crores" remains to be seen. Reclamation of land by dumping has been going along the proposed site for the last one year or more.

- When I visited the Adayar Estuary in June, 1992, I was shocked to find a large mudflat area (along the southern bank) which gets exposed at low tide, attracting the bulk of

the 5,000-odd waders seen in the estuary, fenced, dug up extensively and planted with some mangrove species. I understand this was done by the Forest Department to regenerate mangroves here. It is to be seen if the waders will be able to use this area in the coming years. At least we can be happy if the mangroves survive the water pollution and disturbances caused by buffaloes and firewood collectors!

Finally, I would like to point out that I have never recorded the Dusky Crag Martin at the estuary as mentioned by Rajasekhar. Perhaps he was referring to the Collared Sand Martin which I have seen here on a few occasions.

The Hobby in Bangalore

With reference to the note on the above subject, I wish to mention that I have also seen the Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*), an immature bird, on 10 November, 1988 in the campus of the Pondicherry University at Kalapet, 10 kms north of Pondicherry. A note on this sighting was published in *Blackbuck*, VI(1) : p.21 (1990).

Forest Wagtails in A.P.

M/s S. Subramanya and J.N. Prasad have, in the Sept-Oct, 1992 issue of the *Newsletter*, mentioned that only three sightings of Forest Wagtails are known from Andhra Pradesh. I have seen Forest Wagtails in Sriharikota (Nellore district) of Andhra Pradesh during my stay there (Jan-April 1990). I do not have the field notes with me here and so I cannot give more details now regarding the dates and numbers. In Madras City, about 80 kms to the south, these birds are regular winter visitors, seen from mid-September to early May.

On Woodpeckers

It is over a year since I commenced field work on my Ph.D. research project titled "Ecology of Sympatric Woodpecker species of Western Ghats". I am registered at the Salim Ali School of Ecology, Pondicherry University as a full-time research candidate and the project is supported by the Wildlife Conservation International (New York Zoological Society).

I have been collecting data on the eight species of Woodpeckers in my field sites in the Peechi-Vazhani Wildlife Sanctuary (Trichur Dist., Kerala) which has mainly moist deciduous forest and mixed plantations. I am looking at the foraging behaviour and habitat use in the context of nesting and foraging by the eight species. I am also monitoring the relative densities of the Woodpeckers as well as hole-nesting birds. I have been able to collect good data for the last season and hope the same flow will continue in this season. The data collected is expected to

throw light on the habitat needs for the co-existing species which could help in developing management strategies to conserve their habitats. As many of you may be aware, woodpeckers are specialized birds and need old growth forests and in many cases dead trees to survive. They also provide nest-holes to several other secondary hole-nesters and also other wildlife and are thus important.

I have also been gathering published data on Woodpeckers, hole-nesting birds and other bark-foraging species from all over the world where such work has been done. From what I have so far collected, it appears that very little has been published on the natural history of Indian Woodpeckers. If any readers have studied woodpeckers, I would strongly urge them to publish their results. I would also appreciate receiving any material (published/unpublished) on Indian (particularly Southern Indian) Woodpeckers and I shall gratefully acknowledge any material I use in my thesis, reports or scientific papers.

I am interested in recent sight records of Black Woodpecker in the Western Ghats and in Central India. Details of localities where this species is/was recorded, status (if known), habitat etc. may be communicated to me.

I would also welcome volunteers who wish to assist me locate woodpecker nests at Peechi in the months December '92 to April '93. I would be able to provide accommodation and simple food. I expect volunteers to spend a minimum of one week to ten days, surveying specific localities for Woodpecker nests. Interested birdwatchers should write to me well in advance, giving a brief resume of their interests and experience and also the likely dates and days they are willing to spend. Please correspond with me at the following address:

V. Santhanam
C/o Dr. P.S. Easa
Kerala Forest Research Institute
Peechi 680 653 (Kerala).

COMMENTS. AASHEESH PITTIE, 14-7-470 Begum Bazaar, Hyderabad 500 012

If Darwin taught anything, it was that in nature there is no place for altruism. Every act, every development, every behavior of all living beings is aimed towards one and only one thing — the survival of the fittest. When viewed from this angle, many many doubts about the goings on in nature are solved. Thus groups and couples become individuals or a single unit — trying to achieve the status of fittest. The flock no longer comprises of so many individuals, but becomes an individual in itself. For the fittest flock passes on its genes farthest. And each member of the flock has a chance of furthering his own genes through the progeny of the flock. So is it with pairs.

The feeding behavior of the coucal, by flashing open its wings, does indeed seem to be "... a manoeuvre to stampede lurking prey". I saw one bird do exactly the same thing just yesterday, as it stalked an area of 12" high dry grass. It stopped and bent forward and half opened both its wings in a flash. They were kept open for a moment and then shut. Then this was repeated twice more. The bird caught a 2" long grasshopper, the exact color of dry grass, in its third lunge. Within moments a black drongo was perched upon the nearby fence, watching the coucal closely and also perhaps awaiting the morsel which arose, disturbed by the coucal and too small for the latter to bother with!

The detachment of scientific enquiry is horrifyingly brought to light by Mr Rajiv Saxena's note in the Sept-Oct '92 issue (p.17) of the Newsletter. I was actually left breathless by the end of that little note at the utter cold-bloodedness of the 'study'. So many voice stilled in the night. Do nightjars not sit in the dirt path on either side of the road, or on dirt trials which are only jeepable? Do they actually sit on hard tops? I remember a trip quite some time back into the forests of Etumagaram in Warangal district when our jeep's headlights set afire many a nightjar eye. We stopped in almost every case and watched them take off, into the night. I suppose such things cannot always happen. One thing is certain though, none of us who was on that jeep shall ever again forget the nightjar.

A friend of mine, staying at Mathura Refinery, is going to conduct a survey of wildlife killed on the highways in his region. His address is given below for readers to write him notes of the above mentioned type.

Mr. N. Shiva Kumar, Senior Personal Relations Officer
Mathura Refinery, P.O. Mathura Refinery, Mathura 281005

FOOD BEGGING BEHAVIOUR IN SPOONBILL.
KETAN TATU, Research Student (Env. Sc.), Department of Botany, University School of Sciences, Gujarat University, Ahmedabad 380 009, [for correspondence: A/31, Goyal Towers, near Jahnvi Restaurant, Aulbai Tekra, Ahmedabad 380 015]

In the evening of 10th November 1992, I was observing Waterbirds at Shahwadi suburb of Southern Ahmedabad.

Suddenly, I heard low pitched shrill calls which were produced constantly. When I looked in the appropriate direction, I noticed that the calls were produced by one of the two Spoonbills (*Platalea leucorodia*).

The one which was producing calls was smaller in size than the other one accompanying it. Its beak was also smaller (shorter) in length. It was white in colour and lacked any crest.

On the contrary, the larger one had brownish colour at the base of the neck and possessed a crest. Apparently, the screeching individual without crest was a young one accompanying the adult.

Further observations with a pair of 8 x 40 binoculars revealed interesting behaviour of the young one. It went on following the adult bird, wading across the shallow water. While following, it was bobbing its neck in up and down fashion vigorously, and dipping its beak in water now and then. When the adult stopped at one spot, the young one also stopped nearby the former, but continued its neck-bobbing behaviour along with screeching. In addition, it started shaking its loosely closed wings. Once, it hit the adult with one of its wings.

The behaviour lasted for about ten minutes. At last, the adult flew away followed by the noisy young one!

It seemed that the young one was begging food from the adult but the latter was never seen responding to the former's demand!

CASH REWARD FOR SIGHTING GREAT HORNBILL NESTS. *R.KANNAN, Hornbill Project, Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary, Top Slip 642 141 (via) Pollachi, T.N.*

As part of my ongoing 2-year Ph.D. project on the Conservation of the Great Hornbill in South India, I am examining as many nests as possible to identify the range of nesting parameters the species requires. This upcoming breeding season (Feb-May 1993) I plan to widen my search beyond Anaimalai hills and cover other ranges as well. A cash reward of Rs.300/- will be given to anyone who leads me to an *active* nest of a Great Hornbill. No hide will be erected, nor will the location be disclosed to anyone. I need to find the nests just to increase my sample size of the different nesting parameters. This information is crucial for formulating conservation guidelines to protect these spectacular birds. This project is supported by the New York Zoological Society, the University of Arkansas, U.S.A., and the Oriental Bird Club, U.K.

CHANGES IN SCIENTIFIC AND COMMON NAMES. *ANDREW ROBERTSON, 2 St. Georges Terrace, Blockley, Moreton-in-Marsh, Glos. GL56 9BN, (England)*

An interesting letter arrived recently from Aasheesh Pittie regarding the article proposed for Newsletter for Birdwatchers about Sibley & Monroe's nomenclature. You have obviously managed to persuade him to undertake this and I am more than glad that he is doing so. I have insisted that he must be acknowledged as the senior author.

He has decided to include the names from Ripley's Synopsis along with those of Sibley & Monroe and I have

rewritten the introduction to reflect this, as well as trying to explain more clearly our intentions. As a result the article needs to be re-titled and I have suggested "Nomenclature of Birds of the Indian Sub-continent: a review of some changes taking place." To my mind this better reflects the purpose of the article. I'm sure Pittie will send you a draft so I shall not enclose one.

Thank you for the copy of your letter to V.S. Vijayan about the OSI. I am hoping to drop in at SACON next month. Certainly I would be willing to act as 'British Correspondent' for OSI - it sounds very grand!

Everyone tells me that the monsoons this year were good and it will be interesting to see how this affects the midwinter waterfowl counts.

PROPOSAL FOR EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING OF IWRB IN INDIA. *Prakash Gole, 1B Abhimanshree Society, Pashan Road, Pune 411 008*

Recently I returned from USA after attending the IWRB meeting in Florida. I am sure you are familiar with the work of IWRB, the Ramsar Convention on protection of migratory waterfowl and their habitats. I have been attending IWRB meetings since 1980 and have been elected to their Executive Board in 1981. As you know IWRB has been instrumental in promoting Asian Winter Waterfowl Count. This work has grown substantially.

The Executive Board of IWRB meets every 3 years the next meeting being scheduled in 1995. In Florida everyone felt that the next meeting should be held in Asia, preferably in India. They asked me and I accepted the challenge. Now Asian Wetland Bureau based in Kuala Lumpur (where Hussain is working) is IWRB's agent for Asia & we will have to work in cooperation with them.

The EB meeting of IWRB is a largish affair with about 60 nations, some of them officially, attending. The 2-day meeting is followed by workshops on different topics relating to waterfowl and wetland conservation, study and management. Generally a mid-conference and a series of post-conference excursions are held. I have written to S.Sridhar about this suggesting Bangalore to be the venue.

Unfortunately India is not a member of IWRB. I have written to Samar Singh to consider this aspect.

Now if we are thinking of organizing the Ornithological Congress sometime later, the proposed IWRB meeting will give us an opportunity to gear up our ornithological studies and conservation/management strategies for the international audience. Hopefully this will give a boost to wetland conservation.

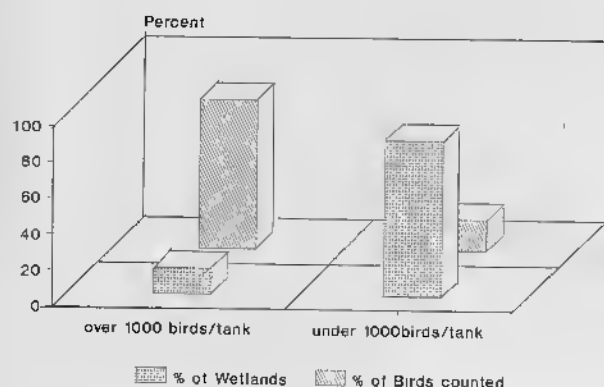
I hope you will agree and support the work of organizing the meeting. May I also request you to please write to Samar Singh, Addl. Secy. Ministry of Environment & Forest, urging India's membership of IWRB and Indian Govt.'s involvement in convening the meeting. I shall also be most interested to learn what you feel about this.

Data Analysis

3,62,349 * waterfowl have been recorded in 1992 from 354 wetlands (183 old and 171 new), 26 important wetlands reported 83% of the waterfowl, whereas the remaining 157 wetlands accounted only 17% of the waterfowl. (see fig.3) Provisional results from 1987-1992 are projected in fig.2.

Fig. 3.

Asian Waterfowl Counts - January 1992
Summary for Karnataka



Number of Wetlands visited 183

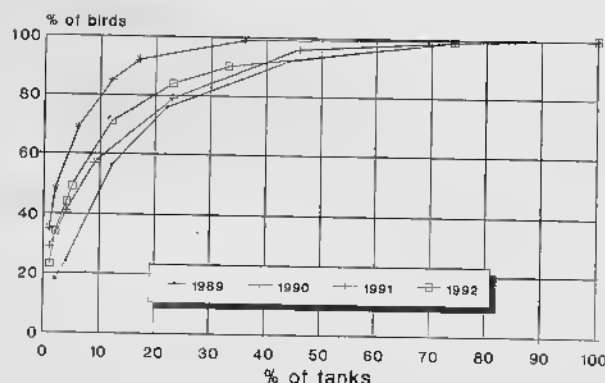
A detailed analysis of five year (1987-91) data is planned for publication by IWRB and AWB in 1993, for understanding the significance beyond more collection and exchange of data. This will be an important document, since we are presently witnessing a sliding environment and fundamental irreversible changes taking place around many important wetlands of the state (see Fig.5). In this publication, an effort will be made to identify the problems and suggest priority actions to tackle them.

Summary

The summary of the 4-year counts for 81 wetlands being regularly covered since 1989 are presented in figure. It can be seen that just 2 percent of the wetlands account for nearly 25 percent of the total waterfowl counts on an average, for the years 1989, 1990, and 1992. There appears to be a marked congregation of waterfowl in only a few tanks in 1991, since many of the wetlands were dry, on account of poor rainfall in the preceding year. (Just 2 wetlands account for 48% of the total waterfowl in that year). Likewise 25 percent of the wetlands had nearly 80 percent of the total waterfowl counted in these 81 tanks, except in 1991 when just 12 percent of the wetlands accounted for 85 percent of the total waterfowl counted for the reasons cited above. Similarly, 40 percent of the wetlands had nearly 90 percent of the waterfowl counted and 75 percent of the wetlands held 99 percent of the counts in all the years, except 1991.

Fig.4

Waterfowl Census, Karnataka
% of tanks covered to % of birds
counted regularly from 1989 to 1992



This striking similarity in waterfowl counts and distributions underlines the importance of covering a few selected sites regularly and monitor the changes in them continuously. The calculation of accurate population estimates and trend analysis of threatened species require high quality census information. This holds the key for future management strategy and protection of wetlands.

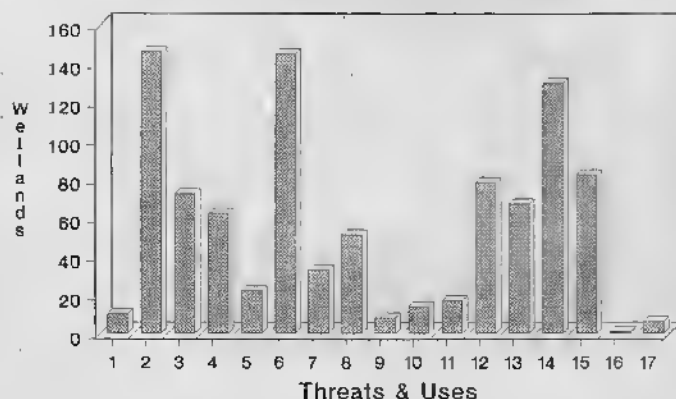
Challenge to Volunteers

These significant observations are a tribute to the dedicated field work of Volunteers, who have covered these tanks regularly, thus providing a platform for comparison and analysis of the data. The continued enthusiasm, patience, skill and efficiency of the Karnataka Counters have earned an enormous store of goodwill and recognition at the International Conference on Wetlands and Waterfowl, held at Karachi last year. It is essential that this excellent work be carried on in the coming years as well, since the census aims at understanding the factors affecting waterfowl populations. IWRB & AWB also propose to evaluate the impact of fundamental changes taking place in the wetland habitats. This will go a long way not only in preventing further deterioration of our wetlands but also redeeming them for all future generations.

As the IWRB and AWB continue to encourage the census work, it depends upon the support of the volunteers who recognise the importance of caring for our wetlands and waterfowl. We are confident that with such support IWRB and AWB will continue to be a major force in uniting all people behind this conservation movement.

Fig. 5

Wetlands of Karnataka Threats & Uses as reported from 338 wetlands



Sl No.	Threats & Uses	No. of Wetlands
1	No Threats	10
2	Sedimentation	146
3	Excessive Growth of Vegetation	72
4	Cutting/Clearing of Vegetation	62
5	Eutrophication	22
6	Agriculture along Drying Margins	145
7	Excessive Cattle Grazing	33
8	Pollution by Domestic Sewage	51
9	Solid Waste Dumping	8
10	Industrial Wastes	14
11	Pesticides & Fertilizers	17
12	Mudlifting & Brick Making	78
13	Hunting & Trapping of Birds	67
14	Fishing	130
15	Partial Reclamation (includes 2 fully reclaimed tanks)	82
16	Dam Construction	1
17	Recreation & Tourism	6

Species to look for in India

Resident species of Waterfowl considered endangered based on six years of census data in India.

Spot Billed Pelican	White Sponbill
Oriental Darter	Black Ibis
Painted Stork	Large Whistling Duck
Wooly-necked Stork	Water Cock
Black-necked Stork	Black Bellied Tern
Lesser Adjutant	Indian Skimmer
Greater Adjutant	

Cover: Bar-headed Geese (*Anser indicus*) have conquered the Himalayas, but are tragically suffering due to loss of habitat, pollution and hunting. The endurance of Bar-headed Geese amazes one and all, for these magnificent birds hold the record for flying over 30,000 feet, across the snow capped mountains of the Himalayas. This endangered bird nests in Central Asia and Ladakh during summer and visits many states of India during winter. Current population estimate for South Asia 20,000

Photo : S. Sridhar, ARPS

Census Participants from Karnataka for 1992

Bangalore District
Baskaran S.T.
Birdwatchers Field Club
of Bangalore
Harish Kumar U.
Harve R.S.
Hemanth J
Jayanth M.S.
Joseph George Dr.
Karthikeyan S.
Krishna M.B.
Merlin Nature Club
Naveen O.C.
Papanna H.B.
Paresh Karmarkar
Prasad J.N.
Praveen Karanth
Raju A.K.
Shyamal L.
Sridhar S.
Sridhara B.A.
Srinivas M.N.
Srinivasa T.S.
Srinivasan N.
Subramanya S.
sukesh Biddappa
Surender Babu S.R.
Yellappa Reddy A.N.

Belgaum District
Timmapur R.G.

Chickmagalur District
Girish D.V.
Chakravarthy A.K.
Ajit M.S.
Shadakshari M.N.
Girijashankar S.
Deepak

Dharwad District
Nagendran C.C.
Ashok Mansur
Uttangi J.C.

Kolar District
Seek Foundation
Raghothama Rao
Rabhudev S.
Ramesh T.S.
Gopalakrishna Shetty T.

Mysore & Mandya District
Ajit Kumar
Dani N.P.

Dinesh Kumar M.N.
Dinesh P.K.
Guruprasad P.
Lalitha
Manu K.
Mysore Amateur Naturalists
Ravi C.
Ravikumar
Sadanand K.B.
Suma S.Rao
Vijayalakshmi
Vinathe S.

Mysore Dist.-
Chamarajanagar Taluk
Siddaramiah B.
Jayadeva G.S.

North Canara District
Basappa Kollanar S.
Bhat G.S.
Gavani S.H.
Hegde G.S.
Rangadasayya H.
Sudarshan P.D.

Raichur District
Ramakrishna S.
Srivatsa S.

Shimoga District
Manjunatha Hegade

Tumkur District
Wildlife Nature
awareness Club
Shanatala
Narendra Kumar
Mahesh G.S.
Murthy T.V.N
Nandesh
Venkatesh S.N.
Krishne Gowda
Manjunath
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